

## **Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 1st July 2015**

Agenda item: 5

Wards: All

### **Subject: Overview of Services and Key Challenges for Children, Schools and Families Department 2015-16**

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children's Services

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin; Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

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#### **Recommendations:**

A. Scrutiny Panel notes the report and considers the key service challenges outlined.

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#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides members of the new Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel with an overview of services provided by the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department and the key service challenges facing the Department in 2015-16.

#### **2 DETAILS**

2.1 The work of CSF Department is informed by a complex legal and regulatory framework and by governmental public policy initiatives. In response to these drivers, the Department provides or commissions a comprehensive range of universal, targeted and specialist services for children, young people and families in Merton. Key statutory responsibilities of the Department working alone or with partner agencies include:

- Leadership of the statutory safeguarding and children's partnership arrangements in the local authority area
- The provision of sufficient, suitable early years childcare and education
- The provision of sufficient and suitable school places for children and young people 0-19yrs
- Statutory assessment of children's Special Educational Needs and the provision of suitable education for those with special/complex needs
- Improving school standards and pupil attainment in Merton Community schools and providing educational leadership to the wider school community

- Co-ordinating school admissions; ensuring school attendance including court action; quality assuring home education, commissioning alternative education
- Safeguarding and protecting children at risk of significant harm
- Providing support to children in need and their families
- Providing support services to children with disabilities and their families
- Looking after children and young people through compulsory & voluntary means
- Achieving permanency for Looked After Children through adoption, fostering or special guardianship
- Provision of leaving care services for young people who have been looked after
- Intervention with and supervision of youth offenders and prevention of offending
- Enabling the provision of positive activities for young people and a suitable local youth work offer

## **Overview of CSF Department Services**

2.2 CSF Department is led by the Director of Children's Services, a statutory appointment, and 3 Assistant Directors who manage operational and strategic services. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the functions of each Division:

### 2.3 Education Division

- School Improvement including primary and secondary school improvement teams; continuous professional development of school staff; schools ICT support; school governor support service; Virtual School for looked after children and care leavers
- Education inclusion including education welfare team; virtual behaviour service; alternative education; youth services; young people's participation
- Early years and children's centres services including children's centres development; family information service; child care quality, standards and provider support; 0-5yrs Supporting Families Team
- Integrated service for Children with Disabilities and SEN including statutory assessment; educational psychology; sensory impairment; parent partnership; social work service, shortbreaks service (including Brightwell Children's Home)

### 2.4 Social Care and Youth Inclusion

- Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH); First Response Team; 5-16yrs Vulnerable Children's Team; Bond Road Family Centre

- Social Work Intervention including core social work teams undertaking casework with children at risk, children in need and children looked after; Court Processes Team
- Permanency, Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers services including fostering support team; adoption team; 14+ settled LAC and care leavers team
- Family and adolescent services including Transforming Families team; Youth Offending Service; My Futures Team
- Quality Assurance and Practice Development including quality assurance of casework; management of Independent Reviewing Officers; professional support to Merton Safeguarding Children Board; professional learning and development

## 2.5 Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

- Commissioning and Partnerships including CSF commissioning team; joint commissioning strategy for Children’s Trust; partnership development with local community and voluntary sector
- Access to Resources service including LAC/SEN placements procurement; 16+ accommodation; fostering recruitment and assessment; LAC contact service
- Contracts and School Organisation including schools PFI contract; schools catering and cleaning contracts; Service Level Agreements with schools; services for young people and families contracts
- School admissions; school places planning; capital strategy and programme management
- Policy, Planning and Performance including strategic and operational planning; research and information; performance information and management reporting; continuous improvement co-ordination; policy tracking and cascade; Children’s Trust induction and communications

## **Budget and Staffing**

2.6 The 2015 -16 revenue budget for the Department and current staffing levels are as follows:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Net LA Budget</b>	<b>Headcount - FTE</b>
Education	£13.562 million	269.6
Children’s Social Care and Youth Inclusion	£13.040 million	210.1
Commissioning Strategy and Performance	£10.092 million	50.0
Other Services*	£14.2 million	6.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£50.894 million</b>	<b>535.9</b>

\* Note: Other Services include senior management; asylum seeker costs; schools related expenditure including PFI unitary charge; schools depreciation; schools pension and redundancy costs

\* Note: Excludes Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant of £172.781 million

2.7 As part of the council's overall medium term financial strategy, CSF Department is required to deliver significant savings in the current and future years:

Year	Saving Target
2015-16	£0.781 million
2016-17	£2.041 million
2017-18	£1.206 million
2018-19	£2.064 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6.092 million</b>

2.8 Savings up to and including the current year have already been agreed by the council and included in budget figures. Proposals from the department to meet future years' savings targets will be published in the autumn budget setting round and reported to CYP Scrutiny panel.

2.9 In addition to the revenue budget, the Department also manages a significant capital budget, largely for the provision of additional school places to meet the council's sufficiency duty. In recent years, the growth in demand for school places has meant that CSF Department has been the major recipient of council capital funding and this is likely to remain the case for a number of years to come. Capital budgets in the council's medium term financial strategy for increasing primary and secondary school places, including for children with SEN are:

	2015-16*	2016-17*	2017-18*	2018-19*
<b>Primary Expansion</b>	£12.031	£4.092	£3.849	£2.575
<b>Secondary Expansion</b>	£0.670	£15.375	£11.500	£13.954
<b>SEN</b>	£2.941	£3.910	£3.000	£0.850
<b>Other</b>	£1.463	£2.707	£2.630	£2.725
<b>Total CSF</b>	<b>£17.105</b>	<b>£26.084</b>	<b>£20.979</b>	<b>£20.104</b>

• £000

2.10 The above figures will be reviewed within the budget setting process in autumn 2015.

### Partnerships

2.11 The work of CSF Department is focused on improving outcomes for children and their families in Merton. In nearly all areas of our work, strong collaboration with other agencies is necessary to deliver services which are well co-ordinated and/or integrated - research over many years, supported by public policy, has demonstrated the positive impact on outcomes from multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches.

- 2.12 CSF Department has had a strong track record over recent years, marked by successive inspection findings, for building strong partnerships with key agencies including schools; other council departments; NHS Trusts and Public Health; the police service and the local community and voluntary sector.
- 2.13 At a strategic level, ongoing partnership development and accountability is promoted via statutory multi-agency governance groups including Merton's Safeguarding Children Board and Merton's Health and Wellbeing Board. These groups, and Merton's Children's Trust Board, undertake strategic planning and commissioning of local services and multi-agency performance management.
- 2.14 At an operational level, strong local multi-agency partnership practice is seen across many areas of children's services including in the implementation of integrated procedures for the safeguarding of children in the borough; multi-agency delivery of early years services; integrated services for children with SEN and disabilities and in youth offending services. A significant number of support services for children and their families and youth services are currently commissioned from the local community and voluntary sector.
- 2.15 Partners in Merton's Children's Trust have for many years agreed that the production of a multi-agency Children and Young People's Plan enables joint priorities to be set and agencies to be held to account for their contributions. Officers and partner agencies are currently in the process of refreshing the CYPP and the new plan is due to be finalised by autumn 2015.

### **Public Policy Issues**

- 2.16 Following the general election in May 2015, the Queen's Speech outlining the legislative programme for the new parliament contained a number of proposed Bills which will have an impact on the delivery of children's services.
- 2.17 A new Education and Adoption Bill is planned. This will provide new powers to change leadership and speed up the conversion of 'inadequate' and 'coasting' schools to Academy status. It will also enable government to require local authorities in some circumstances to hand over responsibilities for adoption (recruitment; matching and post adoption support) either to another local authority or to an independent agency. The establishment of regional adoption agencies has also been signalled.
- 2.18 A Childcare Bill will be introduced which will increase the provision of free childcare for 3 and 4 yr olds from the current level of 15 hours per week in term-time to 30 hours per week.
- 2.19 Government intends the proposed Policing and Criminal Justice Bill to contain provision designed to strengthen child protection through imposing sanctions on professionals who fail to take action on child abuse where it is their professional responsibility to do so.
- 2.20 Details and timings of these Bills are not yet available. The controversial nature of some of the proposals, as well as funding implications of some,

may result in changes to the Bills as finally drafted. The department will need to keep implications carefully in mind in the coming months.

## **Transformation**

2.21 The significant budget reductions affecting the council since 2010 have been a major challenge. The council is responding to this challenge through its 'transformation' programme designed to re-engineer organisational structures and models of service delivery.

2.22 CSF Department's overall approach to service transformation has been to focus on its statutory duties while maintaining investment in preventive approaches which, when successful, can avoid more costly and intrusive interventions. The department has strengthened its approach to commissioning and progressed its longstanding commitment to partnership working. Some of the major 'transformation' already undertaken by the Department includes:

- Establishing a number of shared/hosted services with other local authorities including for school admissions; school improvement and school governor services
- Transforming universal youth services in Merton through implementing a partnership commissioning model
- Establishing a new Commissioning team and Access to Resources service to improve commissioning practice and the procurement of expensive placements and packages of care
- Re-commissioning early intervention and preventive services and establishing 'enhanced' level casework teams to sharpen the targeting of such services and maximise their impact
- Re-organising social care and youth inclusion services to improve assessment, planning and quality assurance in casework and to improve children's and families' experience of social work practice
- Establishing a locality model for the Department's children's centres enabling efficiencies to be made through sharing of resources and expertise and making more efficient use of infrastructure
- Vacating costly outposted service accommodation enabling both savings and closer co-operation across specific CSF services

2.23 In the year ahead and medium term, further transformation will be required to meet outstanding savings targets; to meet the demands of demographic growth; to achieve the Department's ambitions to further improve outcomes for children and families and also to respond to the ongoing public policy focus on children's services. Key elements of this work will involve refreshing the department's Target Operating Model (TOM) and will include:

- Engaging with the corporate flexible working agenda to enable further economies in the use of accommodation and increase efficiency of staffing resources. During 2014-15, some departmental services implemented flexible working pilots but it is now planned for the whole

department to adopt smaller office accommodation 'footprint' and maximise the use of mobile technology from November 2015.

- Examining ways of changing customer contact 'channels' to achieve economies. Although the majority of CSF services will continue to require 'face to face' contact between service users and staff, as part of the ongoing corporate strategy, the department will need to explore the potential for other, more economical, approaches to customer contact.
- Making better use of ICT to support the above strategies but also to promote improved integration of CSF services. Following procurement of a new ICT system (Mosaic) to replace the existing Carefirst system, the department has been preparing for the system's 'go-live' date in Autumn 2015. The implementation of the new system will enable improved co-ordination of casework across social care and education functions
- Driving further economies and efficiencies through progressing the joint commissioning agenda in particular with Merton's Clinical Commissioning Group and with Public Health services now located within the council. CSF officers with colleagues in Public Health and Merton CCG are currently re-commissioning community health services for children including health visiting; school nursing; specialist nursing for Looked After Children and Merton's MASH; and therapies for children. This recommissioning will promote further service integration and strengthen health input into work with vulnerable children and those requiring safeguarding.

### **Service Specific Challenges**

- 2.24 In addition to the department's overall approach to further transformation noted above, there are a number of key challenges facing specific service areas within the department:
- 2.25 As a result of a general increase in expectations on children's services and the 'raising of the bar' demonstrated by the current Ofsted inspection regime, the department needs to maintain a relentless focus on the quality of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. In readiness for inspection, we continue to maintain an up to date self-evaluation; suite of documents and data, supported by regular staff and partner briefings.
- 2.26 As part of the department's continuous improvement agenda, we will continue to review key service strategies including:
- timeliness of court proceedings and permanency for children looked after;
  - overall sufficiency of placements, placement stability and use of out of borough placements for our LAC and care leavers;
  - our response to missing children and those missing education;
  - our work on the child sexual exploitation; violence against women and girls and Prevent agendas;
- 2.27 We will continue to adopt evidence based models of practice where they support improved outcomes for children – for example, following piloting of the strengths-based 'Signs of Safety' approach to engaging families in child

- protection, we intend extending its use in broader casework with children in need and their families. We will complete implementation of the action plan following the multi-agency review of the Child J case and will also need to further develop auditing and quality assurance of casework both in the department and across partner agencies.
- 2.28 The Department and NHS colleagues will continue the development work to implement duties arising from the Children and Families Act 2014 in respect of children with special educational needs and disabilities. This will particularly involve embedding NHS staff in the integrated service for children with SEN and disabilities and developing further the integrated processes involved in implementing new Education, Health and Care Plans for children previously subject to SEN statements.
- 2.29 In the area of Early Years services, further increase in provision for vulnerable 2 yr olds will be needed to meet government targets. Work will continue to increase alignment and integration of CSF, Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health commissioning of under 5's services.
- 2.30 School improvement capacity will continue to be more sharply targeted to schools requiring improvement and on narrowing gaps in progress and attainment for certain pupil groups. The response to individual schools will need to be proportionate and appropriate to their needs including local authority intervention where necessary and the development of partnerships and federations across schools and academies.
- 2.31 Having focused to date on implementing a major expansion strategy for primary school places in the borough, officers are continuing to develop and implement strategy for a significant expansion of Merton's secondary schools sector. Current projections indicate the need for between 10 and 14 additional forms of entry into secondary schools by 2018-19. Following the pre-opening approval of a 6fe Harris Federation school in the Wimbledon area, officers are currently supporting the EFA in seeking a suitable site. It is currently planned that a report on options will be provided to Cabinet in October 2015 and available for pre-decision scrutiny. The remaining forms of entry required will be provided through expansion of existing schools – Harris Morden, Harris Merton and St Mark's Academy.
- 2.32 In the SEN sector, additional capacity has been provided in recent years through the development of the secondary 'centre of excellence' at Perseid school, the expansion of Cricket Green school and through a number of new Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs) in our mainstream schools. In the year ahead we will be implementing plans to add further primary places capacity at Perseid, further expansion and re-modelling of Cricket Green, and two new ARPs for pupils with autism. Officers are also currently looking at the short and longer term needs of Melbury college.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. N/A

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

4.1. N/A

- 5** **TIMETABLE**
- 5.1. N/A
- 6** **FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**
- 6.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report
- 7** **LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report
- 8** **HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report
- 9** **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report
- 10** **RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report
- 11** **APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
  
- 12** **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. N/A

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